

Grays-Elochoman, WRIA 25

This focus sheet provides information on the availability of water for new uses in the Puyallup-White Watershed. This information provides a starting point for potential water users in determining the best strategies for securing water for a future project or proposal in this area.

The Grays-Elochoman Watershed, located in southwest Washington, includes the Deep River and Skamokawa, Abernathy, Germany and Coal Creek drainages.

Annual precipitation in the Grays-Elochoman Watershed ranges from 60 inches per year along the Columbia River lowlands to 100 inches per year in the Willapa Hills. Most precipitation arrives during the winter months when water demands are the lowest. During the summer, there is little rain, and naturally low stream flows are dependent on groundwater inflow. This means that groundwater and surface water are least available when water demands are the highest.

Factors Regarding Water Availability

Increased demands from population growth, low summer and early fall streamflow levels, and impacts from climate change add to the challenge of finding new water supplies in WRIA 25, especially during the summer months.

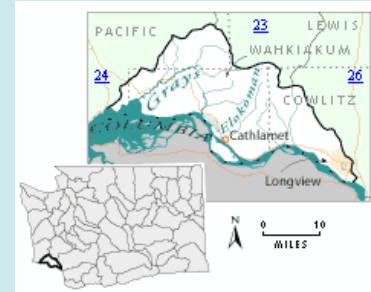
The Department of Ecology is proposing to adopt a Water Resource Management Program for the Grays-Elochoman Basin, WAC 173-525.

The purpose of the Program is to adopt water management rules based on recommendations in the Watershed Management Plan which includes four key elements:

- Setting instream flows.
- Establishing reservations of water for future use and closing subbasins to future withdrawals where needed.
- Specifying conditions of use for access to the water reserves.

Contact the regional office for information on this rule-making effort.

MORE INFORMATION



Definitions

Aquifer: An underground layer of sand and gravel that acts as a reservoir for groundwater.

Instream flows: Flow levels adopted into an administrative rule that create a water right for the stream to protect fish, wildlife, stock watering, recreational uses, and other instream uses and values. Typical instream flow rules now include broader water management strategies.

Mitigation plan: A scientifically-sound plan to offset the impacts of a proposed water use.

Seawater intrusion: The movement of salt water into freshwater aquifers.

Surface water source limitations (SWSLs): A determination by State Fish and Wildlife that water is not available based on needs for fish. See RCW 77.55.050.

After the rule is adopted, applicants seeking new water appropriations will likely need to mitigate for their water use.

Some areas located near the Columbia River may have the potential for seawater intrusion.

Water supply available for further appropriation

The groundwater permit exemption allows certain users of small quantities of ground water (most commonly, single residential well owners) to construct wells and develop their water supplies without obtaining a water right permit from Ecology. For more information about the groundwater permit exemption, refer to www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/fwr92104.pdf.

The permit exemption may not be available to prospective water users in certain areas that have been closed to further appropriation because there is limited or no water available. Check with Ecology staff at the regional office for more information.

Additional options for more expedited processing of new or change applications include:

- Connecting to an established water supplier. This is the fastest and simplest option.
- Proposing mitigation to offset the impacts to surface water and groundwater.
- Processing your application through the Cost Reimbursement Program.
www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/0511016.pdf.

For a more complete look at alternatives for water right application processing, refer to “Alternatives for Water Right Application Processing” www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/1111067.pdf.

Pending water right applications in this watershed

Washington water law is based on the “prior appropriation” system, often called “first in time, first in right.” Applications for water from the same source must be processed in the order they are received.

Ecology asks anyone who needs a water right (new, change, or transfer) to submit the pre-application consultation form and meet with us to review your water supply needs and project proposal.

- Apply for a New Water Right
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/newrights.html>
- Apply to Change or Transfer a Water Right or Claim
http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/change_transfer_use.html

The map in this document shows some of the factors that will be considered when evaluating water right permit applications. Here are some information sources to assist you with your research:

- Locate and research water rights on land parcels anywhere in the state (Water Resource Explorer)
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/info/webmap.html>
- Pending Water Right Applications by County
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/tracking-apps.html>
- Subscribe to a water right application RSS feed for a county or WRIA
http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/wr_app_rss.html
- WRIA map showing the total number of water right claims, certificates, permits and applications
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/Images/pdf/waterright-wria-maps.pdf>
- Search and view well reports using a variety of search tools
<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/waterresources/map/WCLWebMap/default.aspx>

For more information

Ecology Southwest Regional Office
300 Desmond Drive
Lacey, WA 98503
360-407-6300

*If you need this document in a version for the visually impaired, call the Water Resources Program at 360-407-6872.
Persons with hearing loss can call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability can call 877-833-6341*

